A

CORRECT REPORT

OF THE

ELOQUENT, ANIMATED, and truly PATRIOTIC

SPEECH,

DELIVERED BY

THE EARL OF MOIRA,

IN THE

House of Lords,

On Wednesday the 9th of March, 1803,

UPON THE

MOTION OF LORD HOBART FOR AN ADDRESS TO HIS MAJESTY, IN ANSWER TO HIS GRACIOUS MESSAGE

RESPECTING THE

FRENCH AND DUTCH ARMAMENTS.

SECOND EDITION.

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1803.

S. Gosnell, Printer,
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THE

SPEECH,

&c.

MY LORDS,

ALTHOUGH I am perſuaded there can be but one opinion in this Houſe with regard to the propriety of the Addreſs which has been ſubmitted to you, yet I cannot content myſelf with giving a ſilent vote on this occaſion. I am perfectly ready to concur in the aſſurances of ſupporting his Majeſty with every poſſible degree of ſpirit and vigour, and to the fulleſt extent the Noble Secretary can deſire (witneſſing as I have done for ſome time paſt, the hoſtile and domineering ſpirit manifeſted towards this country by the government of France); but I do not think it conſiſtent with the honour of this Houſe, or the character of this country, that this Addreſs ſhould paſs in the way in which Noble Lords ſeem to incline. The ambiguous and undefined ſtate in which the Noble Secretary has left the ſubject, makes it neceſſary for me to call the

attention of your Lordſhips to a few of the conſiderations which may actuate my conduct hereafter, and with which I muſt qualify the vote I ſhall give on this occaſion. I muſt be ſatisfied, as I truſt I ſhall be, that circumſtances have actually occurred on the part of France, which call for this ſudden change of conduct, and *appearance* of *energy*, in his Majeſty's Miniſters; I muſt be ſatisfied that this is no empty diſplay of valourous exertion, no idle threat for the purpoſe of carrying ſome unimportant point in negociation. I hope that it may not prove to be a mere bravado, to cover any additional conceſſions to the government of France; and, on the other hand, I truſt that Miniſters have not adopted a meaſure which muſt neceſſarily produce a very ſtrong ſenſation throughout the country, in order to attribute to the credit of their vigorous conduct, conceſſions which have perhaps been already agreed to in our favour. I muſt make the reſervation for inquiry hereafter, whether a criſis ſo ſerious as the preſent, could not have been prevented: and if it ſhall appear from its nature it *could not have been prevented*, this further queſtion will then remain:—Whether it had not long ago indicated itſelf ſo diſtinctly, as that plain policy called upon Miniſters to grapple with it at once, when we could have met it on terms leſs diſadvantageous than thoſe on which we muſt now encounter it? The communi-

cation which has been made to this Houſe has already created conſiderable alarm in the public mind, and much miſchief has reſulted from it to thoſe perſons poſſeſſing property in the funds; and I truſt that in due time, and at no very remote period, his Majeſty's Miniſters will afford the Houſe a full explanation on this point. But the ſilence of the Noble Lord, at preſent, on the ſubject, renders it neceſſary for me to recur to thoſe circumſtances in the laſt Seſſion of Parliament, which he has thought proper to keep out of view on this occaſion, but under which the Noble Lord and his colleagues then aſſured us, that the country was perfectly reſtored to peace. His Majeſty's Miniſters then declared that they had every reaſon to rely on the pacific diſpoſition of France, and that there was every probability both of the permanence and ſecurity of that peace which had been concluded. I would aſk thoſe Noble Lords what new circumſtance has ſince occurred to ſhake their faith in that pacific ſecurity? Did not all the cauſes of diſcuſſion, and all the difficulties which accompany it, exiſt *then* as well as at this day? The danger *then*, as far as we have ground to judge, was no leſs preſſing than at preſent. What then, I wiſh to know, are the peculiar circumſtances which call for this ſudden change of ſyſtem by his Majeſty's Miniſters? Surely ſome indications ſhould be given, ſome lights ſhould be thrown out, for

the ſatisfaction and information of this Houſe, and of the country.

The Noble Secretary will perhaps decline ſuch an explanation from prudential motives; he may poſſibly plead, that ſuch a diſcloſure might give umbrage to a perſonage, at the head of affairs in another country, and who is a principal party in the pending negociation. What is there in the conduct or character of that perſonage towards this country which peculiarly entitles him to our forbearance? Is there a ſingle point of Britiſh intereſt afloat in any part of the world, where we cannot trace his hoſtility? For my part, my Lords, after conſidering what has lately paſſed, after reflecting on the overbearing and irritating language which has been employed by thoſe who govern that country, I do not think that quite ſo much of punctilious delicacy is neceſſary. I do not think that any thing which the candour of his Majeſty's Miniſters might induce them to diſcloſe at this day, could alter any determination which that perſonage already entertains, or provoke any meaſure on his part, to which he has not already made up his mind. Am I to ſuppoſe that Miniſters fear by an open declaration to offend the *Firſt Conſul* of France? As for my part, I have no notion of talking longer with *compliment* towards this NEW HANNIBAL; who has ſworn on the altar of his inordinate am-

bition, deadly and eternal enmity to the intereſts and proſperity of this country.—*(An univerſal cry of Hear! hear!)* Such fear, however, ſo far from ſecuring us againſt his ambition and reſentment, would be the certain means of expoſing us to their effects. His conduct has already placed his intentions beyond doubt. What! are we to perſiſt in ceremonious flexure and humble courteſy, after ſo full an experience that they only invite aggreſſion? Are we to confirm the Chief Conſul in the miſchievous ſuppoſition, that he has only *to advance with confidence* to enſure our *obſequious receſſion!!!* If he be diſpoſed to threaten us with the conſequences, it is not by proſtration or timid forbearance that we ſhall avoid thoſe conſequences. That would not be the ſucceſsful mode of conciliating *his* reſpect, or obtaining his moderation. No; if we would conſult our moſt immediate intereſt, as well as maintain our dignity, and uphold our national character, we muſt ſhew *that man* that *we* are not to be intimidated by the *menace of conſequences*. We muſt, in the language of our immortal bard,

> " Be ſtirring as the time, be fire with fire,
> " Threaten the threat'ner, and outface the brow
> " Of bragging horror—"

not from any oſtentatious boaſt of courage, but for the ſake of this ſolid advantage, that the reſult will be (to follow a little further the language of the bard)—

" ——So ſhall inferior eyes,
" That borrow their behaviour from the great,
" Grow *great* by your example, and put on
" The uſeful ſpirit of reſolution."

It is in this tone we ſhould call upon the country to regard its poſition. We muſt boldly look our danger in the face, and be prepared to meet it in its worſt form! It is therefore that I expreſs my hope, this conduct on the part of Miniſters is not an empty parade of valour, but a meaſure of promptitude and vigour, which they are prepared to follow up and act upon, ſhould occaſion inevitably call for it. The public mind ſhould not be unneceſſarily alarmed and agitated. Theſe appeals will loſe their effect if they are lightly made, or for any other purpoſe than to rouſe the energies of the people to repel real aggreſſion. If the Chief Conſul of France be ſo far advanced in meaſures of hoſtile menace, as to provoke this conduct on the part of the Britiſh Government, it is in vain, my Lords, to ſuppoſe he will ſtop here. I have loſt all hope to that effect. No man who views his character, who contemplates his vehemence, and impetuous diſpoſition, who reflects on his rooted animoſity to this country, who calculates the boundleſs ſcope of his ambition, and conſiders alſo the uncommon powers of his mind, will doubt that his projects are already faſhioned, and that he is only meaſuring the op-

portunities which may beſt ſuit their advancement. But, my Lords, fortunately for the intereſts of humanity, the paſſions of the boldeſt and the moſt deſpotic rulers are ſometimes controlled by public opinion. There is no ruler, however abſolute his ſway, however extenſive his authority, that muſt not in ſome degree conſult the ſentiments of the people over whom he preſides; and this man, *immeaſurable as his power is*, muſt, notwithſtanding, advert to the diſpoſition, and be anſwerable to the ſenſe of the French nation. To that nation then let our promptitude, vigilance, and vigour, afford an uſeful appeal againſt the deſigns of their Ruler. Let that nation have the opportunity of determining whether it will again plunge into the calamities, and encounter all the horrors of war and its concomitant diſtreſſes, to gratify the headſtrong paſſions of the perſon who has attained the guidance of its fortunes. I am confident that ſuch an appeal as this would not be made in vain. I truſt that there is ſtill a ſufficient degree of good ſenſe in the people of France, to avert (by their decided diſapprobation of it) a war, not undertaken for the intereſts or honour of their country, but grounded on the capricious and extravagant animoſity of an *individual*.

No profeſſion can come more truly from the heart, or can be uttered with more ſolemnity of

ſenſation, than the anxious prayer which I offer, That peace may be ſtill preſerved; contemplating war as at all times a dreadful calamity. I feel that peace is peculiarly indiſpenſable to the preſent ſituation of this country, if the alternative be any thing ſhort of poſitive ruin; but the ſyſtem of unceaſing ſubmiſſion to the domineering arrogance of an implacable rival is poſitive ruin, in the cleareſt conſequence and ſtricteſt acceptation of the term. Even towards the object of preſerving peace; ſure I am, that a too zealous diſplay of ſolicitude to maintain it, would be more likely to excite than to avert hoſtility on the part of the Chief Conſul; and therefore let us, in manifeſting our deſire for the maintenance of peace, mark our deciſion and readineſs to meet the other iſſue. I would ſay, on this occaſion, to France, as one honeſt and determined Engliſhman would ſay to another: "*I deſire to live with you on terms of friendſhip and mutual kindneſs; but do not perſiſt in a ſpecies of conduct that muſt provoke me beyond forbearance. Here is the* LINE, *which bounds every thing that is dear to me. My intereſt, my honour, will admit of no encroachment beyond it. Remain on that ſide of it, and we are friends; paſs it; place a foot* HERE, *and in that inſtant it is war, without further altercation.*" It is, my Lords, in this firm and determined tone that we, the people of England, ſhould addreſs the Firſt Conſul; that we ſhould draw the demarcation,

the leaſt tranſgreſſion of which ſhould be conſidered as an unequivocal declaration of war; and *he* would be anſwerable for the conſequences. —*(Hear! hear! from all ſides of the Houſe.)* Such a tone, my Lords, would be our beſt, is our only ſecurity for peace. Let Miniſters hold ſuch language to the Chief Conſul. If *he* be the ſovereign power in France, and *he* rejects their fair overtures, *the* French people will then ſee that *he* is the cauſe of involving the two nations in hoſtility, and that *his* reſtleſs ambition brings on them the calamities of war. I truſt that we ſhall ſpeedily learn the immediate cauſes which have thus ſuddenly actuated his Majeſty's Miniſters. If the circumſtances be ſuch as to call for inſtant exertion, the country ought to be apprized unequivocally of its real danger; let that danger be but fairly placed in view; let the people know what they ſhall probably have to encounter, and I am confident that they will act with the ſame energy and reſolution with which they have ever acted. Tell them candidly what they are to expect, and they will meet with vigour every attempt ſuch an enemy may meditate. We are not, my Lords, to calculate upon what ſuch an enemy may attempt, by the difficulties which he would have to encounter. Every man who is acquainted with the hiſtory of *that perſon* who governs the country of France, muſt know, that the diffi-

culty, ſo far from damping, would rather ſtimulate his ambition. He has already performed things which appeared to others impracticable; and he has achieved them becauſe that, in fact, in war, enterpriſes of the greateſt difficulty are often rendered feaſible, by that *ſuppoſed* impoſſibility which entails neglect of defenſive precaution. *We ſhould prepare our minds for an attempt upon this country.* To talk of the poſſible ſubjugation of this country would be an abſurdity; and nobody can think me childiſh enough to hold it forth as an object of the remoteſt apprehenſion; but there are points infinitely ſhort of that reſult, ſo conſonant to the views of the Chief Conſul, that every effort on his part to effect them muſt appear ſingularly probable. I thence think we are to look to an invaſion, conſidering the extent of coaſt poſſeſſed by the *enemy*——I hope, there is nothing ominous in the uſe of a *word*, which has dropped from me inadvertently—I wiſh to regard the peace as ſtill exiſting, and earneſtly hope that the meaſures now taking may confirm it; but from the diſpoſitions that have been ſhewn, my uſe of the word *enemy* may not ſeem a ſtrained anticipation. That a landing is practicable at ſome point, from a line of coaſt which almoſt wraps us round, no man will deny; and if we believe that *ſuch* a landing would be a firſt and favourite plan of the Chief Conſul, its taking

place will appear not merely practicable but probable. Thoſe who have cloſely obſerved the character of *that perſonage*, muſt be convinced that he is the *very man* who would coolly calculate upon the total deſtruction of any army he might land, balanced againſt the miſchief its deſcent would create in this country, or any collateral advantage it might afford him. The ſacrifice of ſuch an army would but feebly weigh in his mind againſt the convulſion of which he would hope *(but deluſively hope)* to excite in a country he envies and deteſts. We muſt therefore, my Lords, contemplate our danger in its full extent; we muſt make up our minds; we muſt look this threatened hoſtility in the face, and be prepared to meet it on Britiſh ground.—*(Hear! hear! hear!)* What, my Lords, can we have any doubt of the intentions of that man who tells us, and tells the world, that all the nations of Europe are organized to his alliance, and that he has 500,000 men in arms; THAT ENGLAND ALONE CANNOT STRUGGLE WITH FRANCE? WHAT, MY LORDS! ENGLAND SINGLE-HANDED NOT ABLE TO STRUGGLE WITH FRANCE? Where has the Chief Conſul acquired this information? Has he made this deduction from the leſſon which he received through the unparalleled gallantry of my Noble Friend on my right hand? (Lord Nelſon.) Did he draw that concluſion

from the ſplendid achievements of the other Noble Lord on my left hand, whom I have ſimilarly the pride to call my Friend? (Lord Hutchinſon.)—*(Marked approbation at both theſe alluſions.)* From what period of hiſtory has *he* diſcovered that Britiſh valour, when ſingle-handed, has not always ſhewn itſelf *moſt* competent to grapple with the power of France, and *moſt* ſucceſsful in the conflict? There may be circumſtances when allies are incumbrances; from the diſtraction of views, their enterpriſes may have failed; but when our native gallantry has been allowed its free ſcope, and liberated from the ſhackles of foreign co-operation, we have uniformly maintained our glory, and humbled the proud boaſtings of the enemy. Does he miſtake for *fear* the rational jealouſy with which we have watched the augmentation of French power? There is nothing in it that can chill one Britiſh breaſt. Should ſuch an enemy, my Lords, be diſpoſed to try the experiment on Engliſh ground, I have no doubt as to the final reſult: he will find Britiſh boſoms ſtill fired with the ſame courage, and Britiſh valour nerved with the ſame energies that have at all times diſtinguiſhed their anceſtors. This, my Lords, is the tone in which the people of this country ſhould be addreſſed on this occaſion: the Noble Secretary ſhould have ſaid ſomething to *rouſe* and to *animate*; *official detail* will never prepare

the nation for what it probably may have to encounter. It ſhould not be concealed from the gallant race of men who compoſe the population of this empire, that nothing is more probable than an attempt to land on the firſt commencement of hoſtilities: for, if the danger be but fairly pointed out; if Engliſhmen be taught that they are to fight for their *hearths*, for every thing that is dear and precious to fathers and to huſbands, for their property, their honour, and their liberties, and all the cordial relations of ſocial life, I am confident they will meet it as they ought, and as they have ever done. If thoſe who ſhall be intruſted with the management of the public defence conduct it with common prudence, defeat muſt rapidly follow attack. In any attempt the enemy might make, their principal object would be to create as much confuſion as poſſible; and for the purpoſe of effecting that, they would puſh on for the capital. To prevent any apprehenſion which the news of landing might otherwiſe occaſion, it is of the firſt conſequence that the capital ſhould be unequivocally aſſured every effort will be made for its defence and ſecurity: and I do not heſitate to ſay, that any commander, finding himſelf at the head of an army, between London and the enemy, and ſuffering that enemy to reach the capital without having given him battle, ought to loſe his head! I do not mean to indi-

cate one of thoſe common-place actions, where, after a certain interchange of fire, and a partial loſs, a General thinks he has done enough to juſtify his withdrawing from the field.

The conteſt here muſt be one where the extinction of one army ſhall be riſked for the deſtruction of the other, for this obvious reaſon, that no worſe conſequence would follow the ruin of that body of our troops than would attend the enemy's reaching the capital unfought.

I repeat it, the creation of confuſion would be all the enemy could have promiſed himſelf in the outſet; and you will judge how this object would be effected by the occupation of the metropolis.

That confuſion, however, though we are called upon at every hazard to prevent it, would produce but a ſhort-lived inconvenience. No, my Lords; ſhould ever an hoſtile army dare to ſully theſe ſhores of England, to taint this land of freedom with their unhallowed feet, momentary indeed would be their boaſt; no trophies would they carry back to commemorate their enterpriſe, and their retreat would be diſgraceful flight, if even the means of flight could be open to ſave them from unconditional ſurrender.—*(Hear! hear! hear! from every part of the Houſe.)*

If, my Lords, there be ſtill diſaffected perſons in this country, I hope the number is few and deſpicable; but, were they ten times more numerous, they muſt ſhrink into contempt and diſmay the moment they perceive the determination of the brave, the loyal, and the patriotic, to defend their King, their Country, and their Conſtitution, againſt all enemies foreign or domeſtic. Let us, my Lords, declare our readineſs to ſupport, not with zeal and unanimity merely, but with the ardour of devotion, a Sovereign, who, through the courſe of his long reign, has merited the fond affection of his people; to ſupport him (who may be truly termed the Father of his Country) in maintaining the dignity of his Crown againſt every aggreſſion; and the ſpirits of the diſaffected (if ſuch there be) will ſink, their hopes will vaniſh, while the energy and activity of the people at large will riſe in proportion. My Lords, I beg pardon for treſpaſſing much longer on your attention than I propoſed at my firſt riſing: I ſhould not have done ſo, but for the tame manner in which I ſaw this vote paſſing off. My recommendation is (if I may preſume to ſuggeſt any thing to his Majeſty's Miniſters), that they ſhould candidly and manfully ſpeak out; that they ſhould apprize the people of the utmoſt extent of their danger; and, my Lords, I would riſk my life that the people will meet

the criſis with that ſteady and invincible fortitude which has always characterized them. We, my Lords, have but one *common* cauſe with the people, that is, the defence and ſecurity of our *common* country; and in this glorious and momentous cauſe, I am ſure that all the different orders of the State will ſtand or fall together.

Lord Moira's ſpeech created a moſt extraordinary ſenſation in the Houſe, and was repeatedly interrupted (a circumſtance very unuſual in the Houſe of Peers) by cheers of *Hear! hear!*

THE END.

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